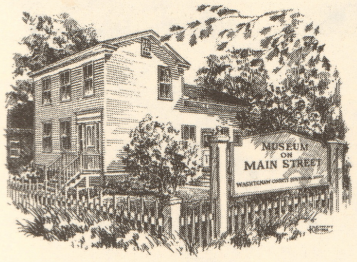
MAY 2008



IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

Richard L. Galant, PhD
President

Ralph P. Beebe
Vice-President

Patricia W. Creal
Treasurer

Judith M. Chrisman
Recording Secretary

Pauline V. Walters
Corresponding Secretary

Directors

Rosemarion Blake
Ann DeFreytas
Tom Freeman
Dean Greb
Susan Kosky
Leslie Loomans
Susan Nenadic
Patti Smith, JD
Jay Snyder
Jan E. Tripp
Susan Cee Wineberg
Cynthia Yao

Directors-at-Large

Harriet A. Birch
Hon. Julie Creal
JoAnne Nesbit
Donald Cameron Smith, MD

Museum Director

Alice Cerniglia

Endowment Committee

David LaMoreaux
Thomas F. Mich, PhD

Newsletter Editor

Patti Smith

Information

Published Seven Times A Year
From September-May.

Museum On Main Street
500 N. Main Street at Beakes Street
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

Phone: 734.662.9092
Email: wchs-500@ameritech.net
Web Site:
www.washtenawhistory.org

Annual dues: January-December individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

RICHARD L. GALANT, PhD

President's Letter

When you were in school studying history, it may have seemed that all history was about was memorizing an event, and the day and time it took place. Often the human side of history was overlooked, especially when we were cramming for an important exam and quiz. Take heart – the human side does exit bringing many heartfelt rewards.

In recognition of May as National History Month, I am proud to announce that at the May 5th Ann Arbor City Council meeting a plaque was presented to the Society honoring the Society's 150th anniversary. Our celebration in July of our anniversary was well-attended. Many WCHS board members deserve credit for their work, particularly Sue Kosky, Dean Greb, Susan Wineberg and Pauline Walters.

During 2008 and 2009 we will be remembering the 100th Year of the Car. In 1908, both the invention of the Model T and the formation of General Motors took place. Washtenaw County has made significant impact on the start-up and development of the car as a product and industry. Events and activities will be taking place later in the year and they will be announced in *Impressions*.

Another celebration of the human side of history was our display **KITCHENS – 1830 to 1950,** which concluded on May 18. There one could bring back memories of smelling warm cookies baking in the oven.

Next, in mid-June, we will mount the exhibition **WEDDING CUSTOMS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY** where you can view gowns and learn about customs of early Washtenaw County residents. Come to the open house and have a slice of wedding cake.

President Richard Galant with award and WCHS members. ***Photo by Cynthia Yao.***

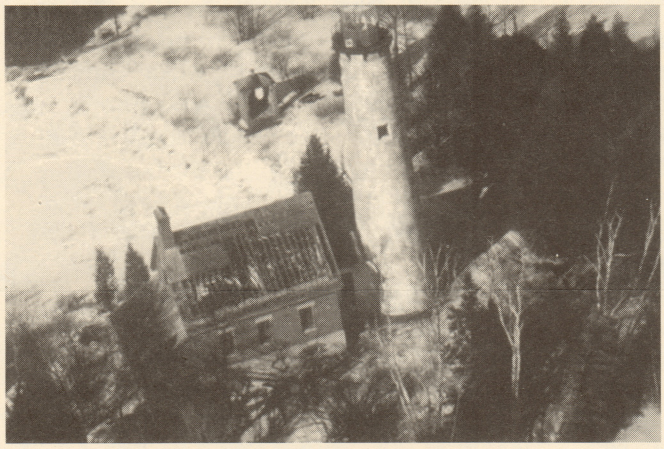
DICK MOEHL AND DAVID FERGUSON

The Light Station on St. Helena Island
Heritage Worth Preserving

On Sunday, April 20, 2008, members of the Washtenaw County Historical Society and guests from the Glacier Hills Retirement Community gathered in the Community's Hanson Room to hear Dick Moehl's presentation on the restoration of the light station at St. Helena Island, located in the Straits of Mackinaw about seven miles west of the Mackinaw Bridge.

Dick Moehl, one of the founders of Beacon Investments in Ann Arbor, became interested in light houses and concerned about their neglect. He and others formed the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association (GLLKA) in the early 1980s.

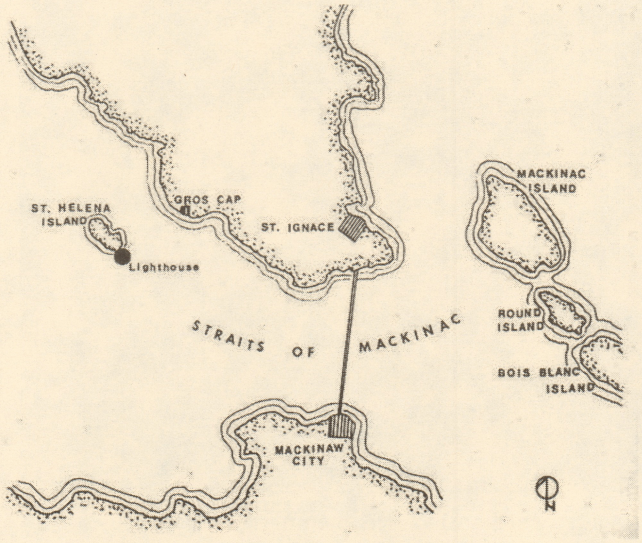
By 1989, GLLKA obtained a $20,000 grant from the Bicentennial Fund to restore the roof and replace the doors and windows of the lighthouse keeper's quarters. In 1988, the St. Helena Light Station was added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Then

and Now -- 2007

The lighthouse tower and keeper's quarters are pictured before restoration and after completion in 2007.



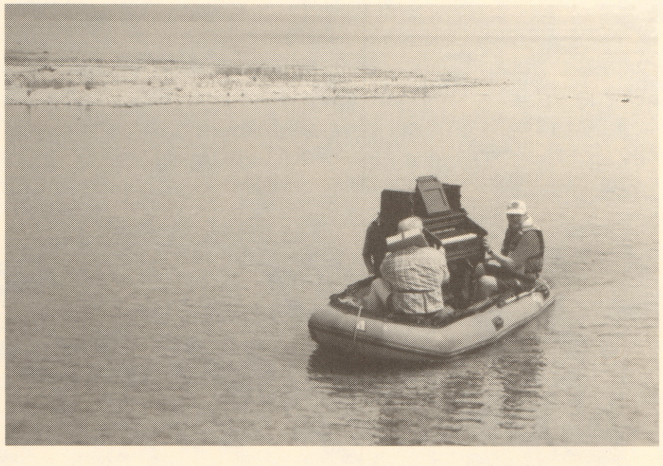
St. Helena is a 266-acre uninhabited island in the Straits of Mackinac. In the 19th century, more than 200 persons lived on the island servicing ships that came through the Straits. The island is approximately one-half mile wide and three-quarters mile long.

In 1873, a lighthouse was built at the eastern end of St. Helena to mark the shoals northwest of the Straits of Mackinac. It was manned by a keeper and an assistant keeper during the shipping season until it was automated in 1922. The Coast Guard only maintained the light tower and, after that, allowed the ancillary structures to fall into neglect. Vandals and the ravages of time took their toll.

Dick Moehl's son, Michael, was an Eagle Scout in Troop 4 from the First United Methodist Church in Ann Arbor. In 1989, the troop began to be involved in the cleanup of the light station. That evolved into many yearly projects.

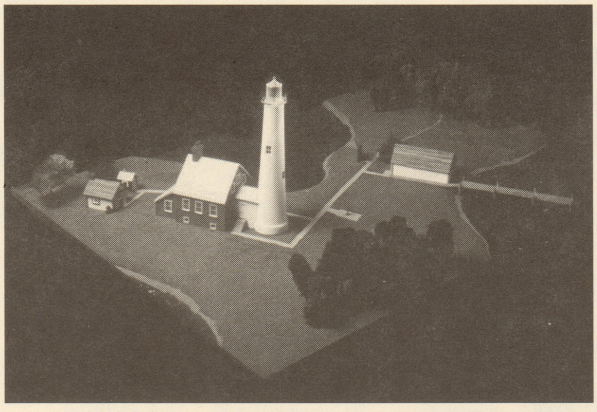
The brick oil house was vandalized and many of the bricks were stolen. In 1991, the scouts of Troop 4 replaced the missing bricks which were difficult to find because of their irregular size.

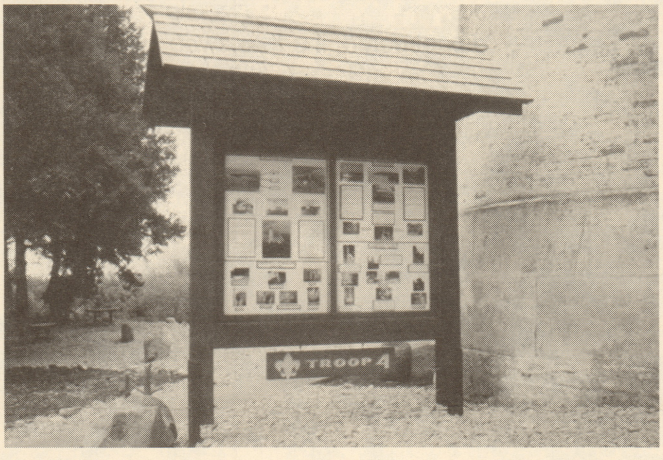
The photo at the right shows the condition of the keeper's quarters in the mid-1980s. Fortunately, most of the door and window trim were relatively intact.

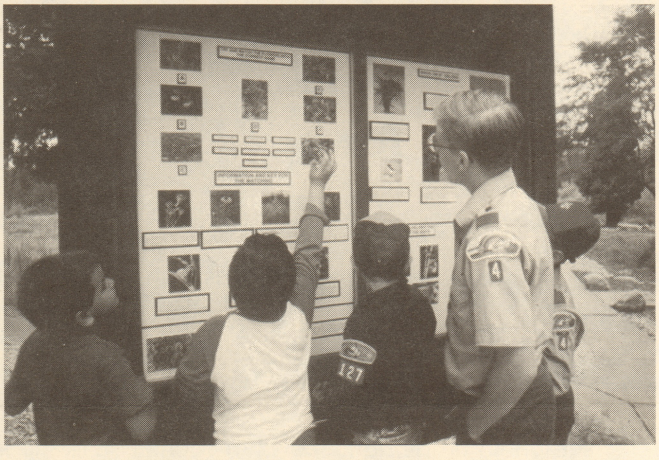


A boat that is large enough to traverse the Straits of Mackinac is too large to land at the island. So, while the large boats moored in Lake Michigan, Zodiacs, shallow draft rubber rafts, landed at the island bringing all necessary personnel and materials. They even transported an organ for the keeper's house on a shallow draft Zodiac raft.

By 1991, Scouts had built a visitor interpretive center, prepared a one-eighth scale model of the light station, held annual Maritime Heritage Education Workshops, received a Keep Michigan Beautiful Award, built an osprey platform and bat houses, restored the privy and published the first edition of the *Educational Resource Guide*.

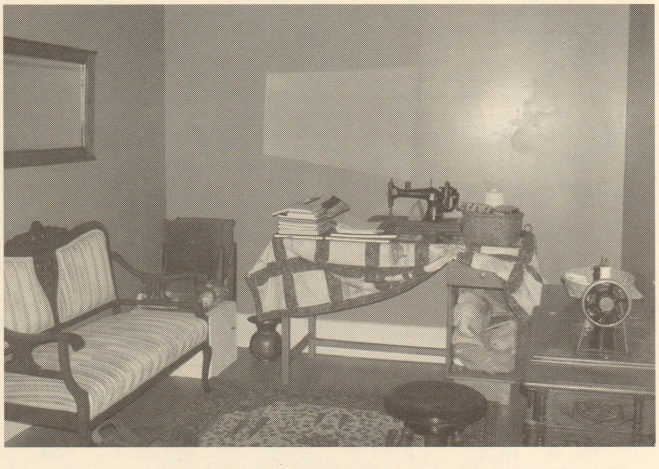




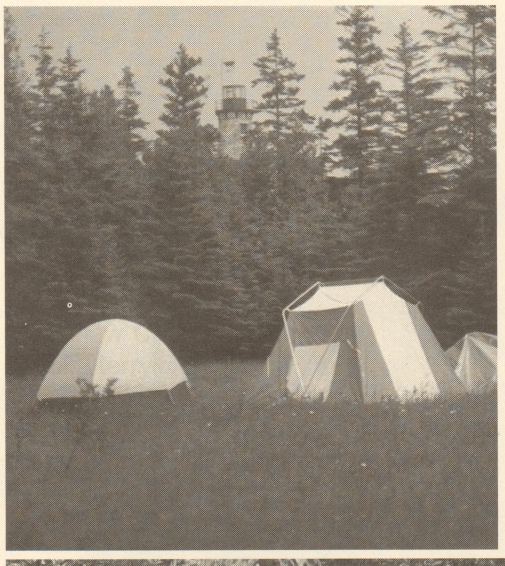


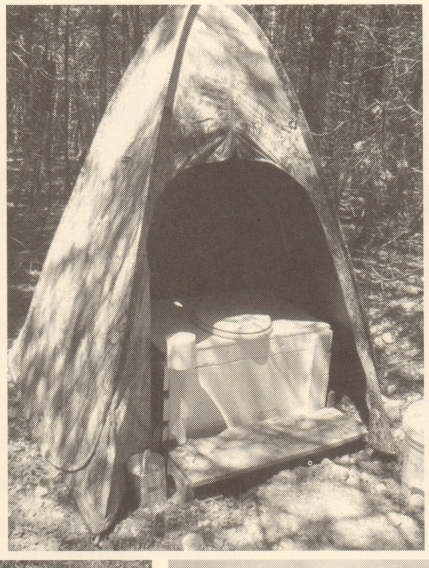
Matt Stanich is shown carrying bricks for the oil house. In 1990, Scout Jon Morrison, created a model of the light station as his Eagle Scout project. With the help of the Coast Guard Station at St. Ignace, the lighthouse tower was painted, and scouts undertook a major beach clean-up, restored a small bedroom in the dwelling and, with the help of Girl Scouts of Troop 253, created an emergency supply storage box. Girl Scouts from Troop 272 in Lansing built picnic tables funded by Home Depot. Another Girl Scout Troop from DeWitt constructed a washing table and contemplation bench.

In 1992, Troop 4 was awarded President George H. W. Bush's 630th Points of Light award for the work at St. Helena.



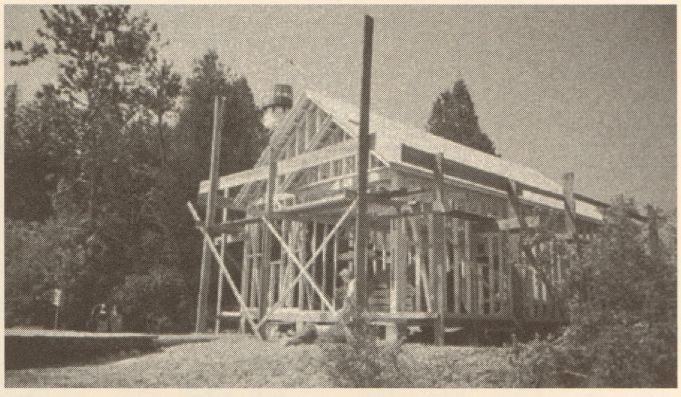
Each summer the scouts that came to work at the light station lived in tents and sometimes as many as twenty tents were necessary. Scouts and adults had their own eating utensils in a sack and did their own clean up.

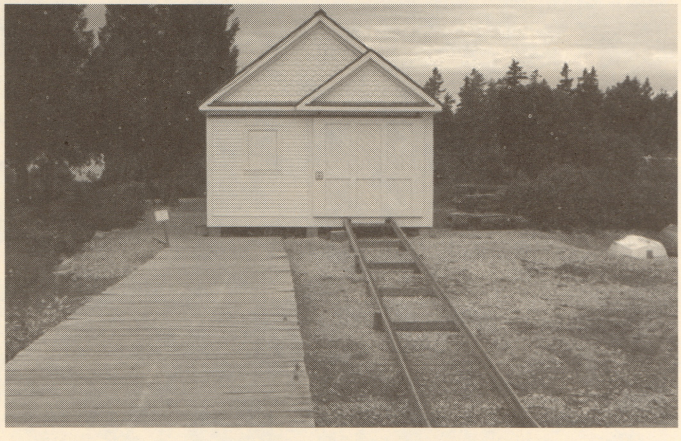




The highlight of the week's work was the bon fire.

The lantern housing was restored and flies the 37-star 1873 version American flag, created by Dixie Edwards, an assistant scout master.





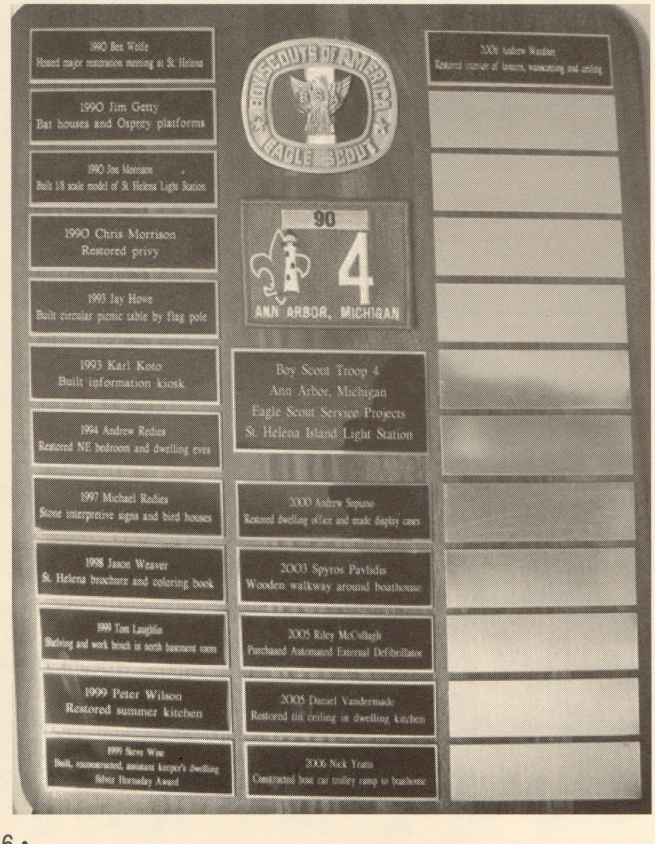
A *ca.* 1909 photograph of the boat house was used to draw plans for a replacement. Lumber for the project was cut from trees felled at Pellston airport in 2000 and footings were poured by hand in 2001. The building was framed and the shingle roof installed in 2002 with clapboard siding installed in 2003. Then, in 2004, the doors and windows were added and the following year the floor was finished. Finally, in 2006 the replica of the original boat house was finished. Further work included installation of the rails into the water for the boat car as shown in the photo at right.

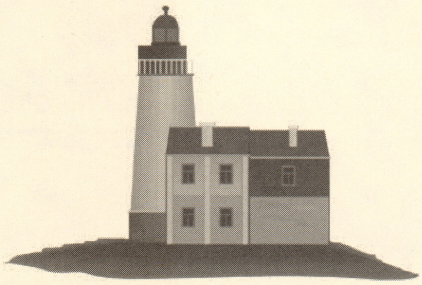
Troop 4 assembled for a group photo in the mid-1990s.

Eighteen scouts worked on their Eagle Scout service projects at St. Helena Light Station. In addition to Boy and Girl Scouts having the opportunity to learn skills and merit badges, there was an academic collaboration with students from Central Michigan University's Biology Department who were studying amphibians and reptiles on St. Helena Island, resulting in two master's thesis being initiated.

The Great Lakes Lighthouse Keeper's Association also offers Maritime Heritage workshops for educators on the island.

Photos by permission: Great Lakes Lighthouse Keeper's Association.





Great Lakes Lighthouse Keeper's Association
P. O. Box 219
Mackinaw City, MI 49701-0219
eMail: terry@gllka.com

Internet sites of interest:
http://www.terrypepper.com/lights/michigan/st-helena/st-helena.htm

http://lighthouse.boatnerd.com/gallery/Michigan/St-Helena.htm

http://www.gllka.com/restoration/index.htm

http://www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=214

Our Thanks to Donors

This issue of *Impressions* is printed on paper donated by the *Ann Arbor News* and is fully supported by a grant from the Buhr Foundation. The Washtenaw County Historical Society greatly appreciates these contributions.

2008 Calendar of Events

All events are held at the Waterloo Farm Museum, 9998 Waterloo-Munith Rd., Grass Lake 49240, unless otherwise indicated.

Antique Tractor, Truck, and Farm Equipment Show
Saturday, May 17 • 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sunday, May 18 • Noon. – 5 p.m.

This free event will feature over 100 Antique Tractors, Trucks and Farm Equipment from local collectors and clubs from around Michigan.

For further information please contact Ron Kaiser at 517-851-8745.

Admission for Tours of the ten-room farmhouse is: $3 Adults, $2.50 Seniors, and $1 for Children 5-17. Children 5 & under and WAHS members are free.
Contact: Ron Kaiser at 517-851-8745

Waterloo Area Historical Society Annual Meeting
May 18 • 12:00 p.m.

A report on the previous season's activities and outlook for 2008. For further information please contact Arlene at 517-851-8745.

Museum Open to the Public Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays
Friday, May 30 to Sunday.
August 31 • 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Costumed guides lead tours of the ten-room farmhouse and grounds.

Admission: $3 Adults, $2.50 Seniors (62+), $1 Children 5-17
Free for Children 5 & under and members of the Historical Society
Contact: 517-596-2254

First People of Michigama: Pontiac's Rebellion
Saturday, June 7 • 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sunday, June 8 • 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

This event features an authentic Woodland Indian village complete with traditional Native crafts, cooking, games and trade. Lamplight tour on Saturday night.

Admission: Adults, $4, Seniors (62+) $3, Children 5-17 $2
Free for Children 5 & under and members of the Historical Society. Admission includes a guided tour of the ten-room farmhouse.
Contact: Wesley Perry, 517-763-6409

Blacksmiths, Soldiers and Log Cabin Weekend
Saturday, June 28 • 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday, June 29 • Noon – 5 p.m.

This special event features a Blacksmith Festival and a Civil War Living History Encampment. On Sunday, we join the statewide celebration of Michigan's log cabins.

Admission: Adults, $4, Seniors (62+) $3, Children 5-17 $2
Free for Children 5 & under and members of the Historical Society. Admission includes a guided tour of the ten-room farmhouse.
Contact: Arlene Kaiser, 517-851-8788

Pioneer Day
Sunday, October 14 • Noon - 5 p.m.

A celebration of the fall harvest season. Our Dewey School Museum is also open for tours during this special event.

Admission: Adults, $4, Seniors (62+) $3, Children 5-17 $2
Free for Children 5 & under and members of the Historical Society. Admission includes a guided tour of the ten-room farmhouse.
Contact: 517-596-2254

Christmas on the Farm and at Dewey School
Saturday, Dec. 6 • 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday, December 7 • Noon - 4 p.m.

A re-creation of the holiday's traditions on an 1880's Michigan Farm and a one-room school.

Admission: Adults, $4, Seniors (62+) $3, Children 5-17 $2
Free for Children 5 & under and members of the Historical Society. Admission includes a guided tour of the ten-room farmhouse.
Contact: Mary 517-851-7890

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ann Arbor, MI
Permit No. 96

SUNDAY • 2 PM
SEPTEMBER 21, 2008

WCHS GENERAL MEETING

YMCA: 150 YEARS IN ANN ARBOR

PITTSFIELD DISTRICT LIBRARY
2359 OAK VALLEY DRIVE
48108

INFORMATION • 734.662.9092
www.WashtenawHistory.org

MEMBER 2008
NANCY KROHN
905 ROBIN RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48103-3008

Kempf House Museum

312 S. Division St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 994-4898
www.kempfhousemuseum.org

Open House Tours — Spring 2008
Sundays, 1:00 to 4:00 PM,
Admission Free, Donations Welcome

Sunday, May 4, 11, and 18
(Closed May 25, Memorial Day Weekend)
Sunday, June 1, 8, and 15

Parking is available in the large public lot just south of the House.

Saline Area Historical Society

The Rentschler Farm Museum, 1265 E. Michigan Ave., Saline will reopen for free Saturday tours on May 3 from 11:00-3:00. The animals will return for summer residence, the garden will be planted, and flowers will be in bloom. Plan to visit any Saturday.

The Depot Museum, 402 N. Ann Arbor St. is open each Saturday.

Information:
www.salinehistory.org
734-944-0442.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.